

APOLOGY STRATEGIES IN EL RUMI'S SUNKEMAN SPEECH : A PRAGMATIC STUDY

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the apology strategies used by El Rumi in the Javanese sungkeman wedding ceremony and to identify the speaker meanings conveyed through his apology utterances. The study employs a pragmatic approach using Trosborg's (1995) theory of apology strategies and Yule's (1996) concept of speaker meaning. This research applies a descriptive qualitative method. The data consist of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences containing apology utterances produced by El Rumi during the Javanese sungkeman wedding ceremony. The data were collected through documentation by watching the recorded ceremony, transcribing El Rumi's utterances, identifying the apology expressions, and classifying them based on Trosborg's theory. The findings indicate that El Rumi uses several apology strategies, including Explicitly Apologizing, Acknowledging Responsibility, Expressing Concern for the Hearer, Promising Forbearance, and Offering Redress. These strategies are realized through direct expressions of apology, acknowledgment of personal shortcomings and responsibility, expressions of gratitude and concern, promises to become a better person, and attempts to reciprocate parental sacrifices. Furthermore, the apology utterances convey speaker meanings related to regret, responsibility, gratitude, respect, humility, affection, and requests for parental forgiveness, blessing, and approval. The findings indicate that apology in the Javanese sungkeman ceremony functions not only as an expression of regret but also as a form of respect, filial devotion, and an effort to maintain family harmony before entering married life.*

Keyword : *Apology Strategy, Pragmatics, speech, sungkeman*

INTRODUCTION

Apology is an important form of communication used to acknowledge responsibility, express regret, and maintain harmonious relationships between speakers and hearers. According to Trosborg (1995), speakers may employ different apology strategies depending on the situation, interpersonal relationship, and communicative purpose. Therefore, an apology is not limited to the expression of regret but may also involve acknowledging responsibility, showing concern, promising not to repeat an offense, or offering redress. Previous studies have shown that apology strategies are influenced by social and cultural contexts. (Chejnová, 2021). Speakers select apology strategies according to contextual factors and communicative goals (Chen, 2022)

In Javanese culture, apology may carry meanings that extend beyond admitting wrongdoing. This can be seen in the *sungkeman* ritual performed during Javanese wedding ceremonies, in which the bride and groom kneel before their parents to ask for forgiveness, express gratitude, and seek blessings before beginning married life. The ritual reflects cultural values such as humility, respect for parents, filial devotion, and family harmony. (Ramlah & Sartini, 2023) found that apology expressions among Javanese speakers are influenced by cultural values and interpersonal relationships, and that apologies may function to maintain harmony and demonstrate respect. Thus, apology expressions in the *sungkeman* ceremony provide an important context for examining the relationship between language use and cultural values.

Understanding the meaning of apology utterances also requires attention to the speaker's intention and the context in which an utterance is produced. speaker meaning as the meaning communicated by a speaker through an utterance in a particular context (Yule, 1996) . In the *sungkeman* ceremony, an apology may therefore communicate more than regret. It may express gratitude for parental love and sacrifices, respect toward parents, humility, affection, responsibility, and a request for forgiveness and blessings. The interpretation of such meanings requires consideration of both the linguistic expression and the cultural situation in which it occurs.

Previous studies have examined apology strategies in various contexts, including academic emails, second-language learning, institutional communication, social media, and intercultural interactions (Abudin, 2021; Chejnová, 2021; Chen, 2022; Huda, 2024; Shakki, 2021) . Although (Ramlah & Sartini, 2023) examined apology strategies in Javanese and Madurese contexts, studies specifically focusing on apology strategies and speaker meaning in the Javanese *sungkeman* wedding ceremony remain limited. In addition, previous research has generally focused on identifying apology strategies, while the meanings conveyed through apology utterances in a culturally significant wedding ritual have received less attention. This study addresses this gap by analyzing El Rumi's apology utterances during the Javanese *sungkeman* wedding ceremony.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the apology strategies used by El Rumi based on (Trosborg, 1995) theory and to interpret the speaker meanings conveyed through his apology utterances based on (Yule, 1996) concept of speaker meaning. The study focuses on two research problems: (1) What apology strategies are used by El Rumi in the Javanese *sungkeman* wedding ceremony? and (2) What speaker meanings are conveyed through El Rumi's apology utterances? The study is expected to contribute to pragmatic research by showing how apology strategies function not only as expressions of regret but also as expressions of respect, filial devotion, gratitude, and family harmony within the Javanese cultural context.

THEORY AND METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design with a pragmatic approach. The qualitative method was used because the study focused on describing and interpreting apology utterances based on their linguistic forms and contextual meanings rather than examining the data statistically. The pragmatic approach was applied to analyze the apology strategies used by El Rumi and the speaker meanings conveyed through his apology utterances during the Javanese *sungkeman* wedding ceremony.

The data consisted of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences containing apology utterances produced by El Rumi during the Javanese *sungkeman* wedding ceremony. The source of the data was a recorded video entitled El Rumi Sungkeman, which was published on the Surya Citra *Televisi* YouTube channel on April 26, 2026. The video had a duration of 16 minutes and 50 seconds. The video was selected as the data source because it contained naturally occurring apology utterances produced by El Rumi during the *sungkeman* ceremony with his parents. The participant or data subject in this study was El Rumi, while the unit of analysis was the apology utterances produced by him during the ceremony.

The data were collected through documentation. First, the researcher watched the recorded ceremony several times to understand the context of the interaction. Second, the researcher transcribed the utterances produced by El Rumi during the *sungkeman* ceremony. Third, the transcript was examined to identify utterances containing apology expressions. Fourth, the relevant utterances were selected as the research data. Finally, the selected data were coded and classified according to the apology strategies proposed by Trosborg (1995).

The data were analyzed using Trosborg's (1995) theory of apology strategies and Yule's (1996) concept of speaker meaning. Trosborg's theory was used to identify and classify the apology strategies found in El Rumi's utterances. The identified strategies included Explicitly Apologizing, Acknowledging Responsibility, Expressing Concern for the Hearer, Promising Forbearance, and Offering Redress. After the strategies were identified, each apology utterance

was interpreted according to Yule's (1996) concept of speaker meaning by considering the context and communicative intention of the utterance.

The analysis also followed the interactive model proposed by (Miles, 2014), which consisted of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data condensation stage, the researcher selected and focused on utterances relevant to the research questions and excluded utterances that did not contain apology expressions. In the data display stage, the selected utterances were organized and classified according to Trosborg's apology strategies and then interpreted according to their speaker meanings. In the final stage, the researcher drew conclusions based on the findings and verified the analysis by reviewing the transcript, classification, and interpretation to ensure consistency with the research questions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis identified 35 apology utterances produced by El Rumi during the Javanese *sungkeman* wedding ceremony. The data were analyzed based on Trosborg's (1995) theory of apology strategies and Yule's (1996) concept of speaker meaning. The analysis found five types of apology strategies: Acknowledging Responsibility, Explicitly Apologizing, Expressing Concern for the Hearer, Offering Redress, and Promising

1. Apology Strategies Used by El Rumi

Table 1. Frequency of Apology Strategies

No	Apology strategy	Frequency	Percentage
1	Acknowledging Responsibility	12	34,3%
2	Explicitly Apologizing	11	31.4%
3	Expressing Concern for the Hearer	5	14.3%
4	Offering Redress	4	11.4%
5	Promising Forbearance	3	8.6%
Total		35	100.0%

Table 1 shows that Acknowledging Responsibility was the most frequently used strategy, occurring in 12 utterances (34.3%). Explicitly Apologizing was the second most frequent strategy, with 11 utterances (31.4%). Expressing Concern for the Hearer occurred in 5 utterances (14.3%), followed by Offering Redress in 4 utterances (11.4%). Promising Forbearance was the least frequent strategy, with 3 utterances (8.6%).

Acknowledging Responsibility

Acknowledging Responsibility was the most frequently identified strategy, with 12 utterances (34.3%). This strategy occurred when El Rumi recognized his mistakes, shortcomings, stubborn behavior, or previous disagreements with his parents. One example is the following utterance:

Aku juga mungkin sering berdebat dengan Ayah.

"I often argued with Dad."

In this utterance, El Rumi acknowledges that he often argued with his father. He recognizes his own behavior rather than denying his involvement in the disagreements. According to Trosborg (1995), acknowledging responsibility occurs when a speaker admits responsibility for an offense or recognizes that their behavior may have caused a problem. In the context of the *sungkeman* ceremony, this utterance also conveys humility because El Rumi openly recognizes his shortcomings before his father.

Another example is:

Aku mungkin salah satu anak yang paling keras.

"Perhaps I was one of the most stubborn children."

This utterance demonstrates the speaker's awareness of his own personality and behavior. By describing himself as stubborn, El Rumi acknowledges a characteristic that may have contributed to disagreements with his parents. The utterance therefore communicates acceptance of responsibility for his past behavior. The frequent use of this strategy indicates that acknowledging mistakes and shortcomings was an important part of his apology expressions.

Explicitly Apologizing

Explicitly Apologizing occurred in 11 utterances (31.4%). This strategy was identified through direct expressions of apology, including *minta maaf* and *mohon maaf*. An example is:

Aku juga mau minta maaf kalau selama ini ada kata atau sikap aku yang mungkin pernah bikin Ayah sedih.

"I would also like to apologize if my words or actions have ever made Dad feel hurt."

The expression *minta maaf* directly communicates the speaker's intention to apologize. In this utterance, El Rumi asks his father for forgiveness for words or actions that may have caused sadness. According to Trosborg (1995), Explicitly Apologizing involves expressing an apology directly through conventional apology expressions. This utterance demonstrates that the speaker openly acknowledges the possibility that his behavior has affected his father emotionally.

Another example is:

Jadi aku sekali lagi mau minta maaf kalau pernah nyakitin hati Bunda, baik sengaja maupun tidak.

"Once again, I would like to apologize if I have ever hurt Mom's feelings, whether intentionally or unintentionally."

The expression *minta maaf* makes the apology explicit, while the phrase *baik sengaja maupun tidak* indicates that the speaker considers both intentional and unintentional actions that may have hurt his mother. In the *sungkeman* ceremony, this direct apology also communicates respect and a desire to receive parental forgiveness before entering married life.

Expressing Concern for the Hearer

Expressing Concern for the Hearer appeared in 5 utterances (14.3%). This strategy emphasizes the speaker's awareness of the hearer's feelings or condition. One example from the data is:

Aku tahu banyak keputusan aku mungkin membuat Ayah khawatir.

"I know many of my decisions may have made Dad worried."

The utterance shows that El Rumi recognizes the possibility that his decisions have caused his father to worry. The word *khawatir* indicates awareness of the emotional effect of his actions on another person. The speaker therefore considers his father's feelings rather than focusing only on his own regret.

Another utterance in the data is:

Aku memohon doa dan restu Bunda agar langkahku ini diridai Allah.

"I ask for your prayers and blessing so that this step will be blessed by Allah."

In this utterance, El Rumi respectfully asks for his mother's prayers and blessing. The request reflects the importance of his mother's support as he begins married life. In the context of the ceremony, the utterance demonstrates the significance of the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. It also shows that the apology-related expressions are connected with respect for parents and the desire to maintain a positive family relationship.

Offering Redress

Offering Redress occurred in 4 utterances (11.4%). This strategy involves an offer or intention to do something to address a previous problem or improve a situation. One example is:

Aku berharap bisa membalas semua pengorbanan Ayah.

"I hope I can repay all of Dad's sacrifices."

The utterance expresses El Rumi's intention to repay his father's sacrifices. Rather than merely acknowledging what his father has done, the speaker communicates a desire to respond to those sacrifices through his future actions. This reflects the meaning of redress because the speaker expresses an intention to do something in response to the relationship and responsibilities he recognizes.

Another example is:

Nanti juga aku tolong kalau aku sudah menikah dibantu juga saran-sarannya supaya aku bisa menjadi suami yang baik.

"After I get married, I hope to receive your advice and guidance so that I can become a good husband."

This utterance expresses the speaker's willingness to receive guidance from his parents as he prepares for married life. It reflects his recognition that he still needs their support and advice. In the context of *sungkeman*, such expressions connect the speaker's future responsibilities with his continuing relationship with his parents.

Promising Forbearance

Promising Forbearance was the least frequent strategy, appearing in 3 utterances (8.6%). This strategy involves expressing an intention to avoid previous inappropriate behavior or to improve future conduct. One example is:

Semoga setelah menikah aku bisa menjadi pribadi yang lebih baik.

"Hopefully, after getting married I can become a better person."

This utterance expresses El Rumi's hope to improve himself after marriage. It indicates that the speaker does not only acknowledge his shortcomings but also looks toward becoming a better person in the future. The utterance therefore communicates an intention to change his behavior positively.

Another example is:

Agar aku bisa menjadi suami yang baik, suami yang bertanggung jawab.

"So that I can become a good and responsible husband."

The speaker expresses his intention to fulfill his future role as a husband responsibly. This statement reflects a commitment to better conduct as he enters a new stage of life. Although this strategy appeared less frequently than the others, it demonstrates that the apology expressions also included intentions concerning future behavior.

2. Speaker Meanings Conveyed through El Rumi's Apology Utterances

The second research question concerned the meanings conveyed through El Rumi's apology utterances. Based on Yule's (1996) concept of speaker meaning, the analysis identified five meanings: expressing sincere regret, expressing gratitude, seeking forgiveness, restoring harmony with parents, and showing humility before marriage. Their frequencies and percentages are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency of Speaker Meanings

No.	Speaker Meaning	Frequency	Percentage
1	To Express Sincere Regret	12	34%
2	To Express Gratitude	9	26%
3	To Seek Forgiveness	6	17%
4	To Restore Harmony with Parents	5	14%
5	To Show Humility Before Marriage	3	9%
Total		35	100%

Table 2 shows that expressing sincere regret was the most frequent speaker meaning, appearing in 12 utterances (34%). Expressing gratitude occurred in 9 utterances (26%), followed by seeking forgiveness in 6 utterances (17%). Restoring harmony with parents appeared in 5 utterances (14%), while showing humility before marriage occurred in 3 utterances (9%). These findings indicate that the speaker's intended meanings extended beyond the direct expression of apology.

Express Sincere Regret

Expressing sincere regret was identified in 12 utterances (34%). This meaning appeared when El Rumi acknowledged his shortcomings and expressed

regret for behavior that might have hurt or disappointed his parents. One example is:

Aku benar-benar minta maaf atas semua kekurangan aku sebagai anak

"I sincerely apologize for all my shortcomings as a son."

The utterance conveys regret through the direct expression *minta maaf* and the acknowledgment of personal shortcomings. The phrase *sebagai anak* emphasizes the speaker's role in the family and his awareness that he has not always been the son he wishes to be. Based on Yule's (1996) concept of speaker meaning, the utterance communicates more than its literal wording because it expresses the speaker's intention to show regret and recognize his limitations in his relationship with his parents.

To Express Gratitude

Expressing gratitude appeared in 9 utterances (26%). In these utterances, El Rumi acknowledged his parents' support, guidance, and sacrifices. One example is:

Terima kasih Ayah untuk semua yang Ayah sudah berikan.

"Thank you, Dad, for everything you have given me."

The expression *terima kasih* directly communicates appreciation toward his father. The utterance shows that the speaker intended to recognize what his father had provided throughout his life. In the *sungkeman* ceremony, gratitude becomes an important part of the message because the speaker acknowledges his parents' contributions before beginning a new stage of life. This finding demonstrates that the meanings conveyed during the ceremony were not limited to regret and apology but also included appreciation for parental care and support.

To Seek Forgiveness

Seeking forgiveness was identified in 6 utterances (17%). This meaning appeared when El Rumi asked his parents to forgive his past mistakes and shortcomings. One example is:

Sekali lagi aku mohon maaf dari hati yang paling dalam.

"Once again, I sincerely apologize from the bottom of my heart."

The expression *mohon maaf* communicates a request for forgiveness, while *dari hati yang paling dalam* emphasizes the sincerity of the speaker's apology. The utterance indicates that El Rumi intended not only to acknowledge his mistakes but also to receive forgiveness from his parents. In the context of *sungkeman*, seeking forgiveness is closely related to the speaker's desire to maintain a respectful and harmonious relationship with his parents before marriage.

To Restore Harmony with Parents

Restoring harmony with parents appeared in 5 utterances (14%). This meaning was conveyed through expressions that acknowledged previous disagreements, recognized the parents' importance, and demonstrated a desire to maintain a positive relationship with them.

For example, El Rumi acknowledged that he had often argued with his parents. By recognizing these disagreements during the ceremony, he communicated awareness of past conflicts and the importance of his relationship with them. His apology expressions can therefore be interpreted as an effort to strengthen family relationships and maintain harmony as he begins married life.

This meaning is significant in the context of the Javanese *sungkeman* ceremony because the interaction provides an opportunity for the speaker to express respect and seek reconciliation with his parents. The utterances show that apology can function as a means of maintaining interpersonal relationships rather than merely responding to an individual mistake.

To Show Humility Before Marriage

Showing humility before marriage appeared in 3 utterances (9%). This meaning was reflected in El Rumi's acknowledgment of his shortcomings and his requests for parental prayers, blessing, and approval. One example is:

Aku mohon doa restu dan rida dari Ayah.

"I ask for Dad's prayers, blessing, and approval."

The utterance shows that El Rumi recognizes the importance of his father's support before entering married life. By asking for prayers and blessing, he communicates respect for his father and acknowledges his position within the family. The utterance also reflects humility because the speaker seeks parental approval rather than presenting his marriage as an entirely individual decision. In this context, humility is connected with respect, family relationships, and the transition into a new stage of life.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that El Rumi used several apology strategies to communicate responsibility, regret, concern, redress, and intentions for future behavior. Acknowledging Responsibility was the most frequent strategy, followed by Explicitly Apologizing. This distribution indicates that the speaker often recognized his past behavior and shortcomings alongside directly expressing his apology.

The predominance of Acknowledging Responsibility is consistent with Trosborg's (1995) framework, in which accepting responsibility is one way speakers respond to an offense. In the data, El Rumi acknowledged that his behavior, including stubbornness and disagreements, could have affected his parents. These acknowledgments provided context for his apologies and demonstrated his awareness of his role in previous conflicts. Explicitly Apologizing also played an important role because direct expressions such as *minta maaf* clearly communicated the speaker's intention to apologize.

The findings further show that the strategies were used within a culturally meaningful interaction. In the Javanese *sungkeman* ceremony, El Rumi addressed his parents with expressions of apology, gratitude, and requests for blessing. These expressions reflected respect toward parents and recognition of their importance in his life. The findings therefore support the view that the

interpretation of an utterance depends not only on its linguistic form but also on the context in which it is used.

The analysis of speaker meaning also demonstrates that El Rumi's utterances conveyed several intentions beyond the literal meaning of saying sorry. Yule's (1996) concept of speaker meaning helps explain how the utterances communicated sincere regret, gratitude, requests for forgiveness, a desire to restore family harmony, and humility before marriage. For example, the expression of gratitude acknowledged the parents' sacrifices, while requests for prayers and blessing communicated respect and the importance of parental support.

These findings are in line with the cultural significance of *sungkeman* discussed by Ramlah and Sartini (2023), particularly its association with respect and relationships between children and parents. In El Rumi's utterances, these values were expressed through the acknowledgment of mistakes, direct apologies, gratitude, and requests for parental blessing. The findings also relate to Chejnová (2021) and Chen (2022), whose studies address apology and its interpersonal functions. In the present study, apology expressions were closely connected with the speaker's relationship with his parents and the social context of the wedding ceremony.

Overall, the results indicate that apology in the Javanese *sungkeman* ceremony was not limited to expressing regret. El Rumi's utterances also communicated gratitude, requests for forgiveness, efforts to maintain family harmony, and humility before marriage. The combination of apology strategies and speaker meanings demonstrates how language functions in a culturally significant family interaction. The findings highlight the relationship between pragmatic meaning and cultural values, particularly respect for parents, filial devotion, and family harmony.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of El Rumi's apology utterances in the Javanese *sungkeman* wedding ceremony, this study identified five apology strategies based on Trosborg's (1995) theory: Acknowledging Responsibility, Explicitly Apologizing, Expressing Concern for the Hearer, Offering Redress, and Promising Forbearance. Among these strategies, Acknowledging Responsibility was the most frequently used, occurring in 12 of 35 utterances (34.3%), followed by Explicitly Apologizing with 11 utterances (31.4%). Expressing Concern for the Hearer occurred in 5 utterances (14.3%), Offering Redress in 4 utterances (11.4%), and Promising Forbearance in 3 utterances (8.6%). These findings indicate that El Rumi frequently acknowledged his mistakes and shortcomings while also directly expressing his apologies to his parents.

The analysis of speaker meaning based on Yule's (1996) concept identified five meanings conveyed through the apology utterances: to express sincere regret, to express gratitude, to seek forgiveness, to restore harmony with parents, and to show humility before marriage. Expressing sincere regret was the most

frequent meaning, found in 12 utterances (34%), followed by expressing gratitude in 9 utterances (26%), seeking forgiveness in 6 utterances (17%), restoring harmony with parents in 5 utterances (14%), and showing humility before marriage in 3 utterances (9%).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that El Rumi's apology utterances conveyed meanings beyond simply expressing regret or saying sorry. The utterances also reflected respect for parents, gratitude for their support and sacrifices, the desire for forgiveness and family harmony, and humility before entering married life. Thus, apology in the Javanese *sungkeman* ceremony functions as a culturally meaningful form of communication that reflects interpersonal relationships and cultural values, particularly respect, filial devotion, and family harmony.

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